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## Book Review



Maman, Aharon. 2019. מילון משווה למרכיב העברי בלשונות היהודים על יסוד האוסף של פרופ' שלמה מורג ז"ל, מהדורה שנייה מתוקנת ומורחבת (*Synoptic Dictionary of the Hebrew Component in Jewish Languages, Based on the Collection of Shelomo Morag, z"l, Revised and Expanded Second Edition*). *Eda VeLashon* 36. Jerusalem: Magnes Press. ISBN 978-965-7008-40-9, 895 pp.

In 1997–98, as part of my post-B.A. study-abroad program at the Hebrew University of Jerusalem, I had the pleasure of sitting in on a meeting or two of Shelomo Morag's workshop for research on Hebrew words in Jewish languages, a project of the Jewish Oral Traditions Research Center. I remember informants and scholars sitting around a seminar table discussing Hebrew words in various languages, especially Judeo-Arabic. I did not realize that the workshop would lead to a dictionary that has become so crucial for my own and others' research in comparative Jewish linguistic studies.

This dictionary was a lifelong plan of Morag, but sadly he did not live to see its completion. After his death in 1999, Aharon Maman took over leadership of the project and, in 2013, compiled the data the group had accumulated over 25 years. The dictionary represented a landmark achievement and, as its introduction explains, required overcoming many technical and other obstacles. Six years later, Maman published a heavily revised edition of the dictionary, the version under review here. In this edition, Maman has fixed several typos and other shortcomings, including some pointed out by previous reviewers (e.g., Schwarzwald 2014). For example, entry headings are now indicated with a larger and distinct font, so it is easier to locate entries. Entries that were originally presented only in Hebrew-letter transcriptions, especially in Judeo-Italian, are now presented in Latin-letter transcriptions, clarifying their pronunciations. More significantly, this edition has several expanded and new components, totaling about 300 additional pages: 400 new entries and 2000+ new sub-entries (in addition to the original 5,704 entries and 12,000+ subentries), an expanded

bibliography, an 84-page transliteration index, an introduction to this edition, and English translations of both introductions.

The transliteration index makes it easier for users to find words presented under unexpected entries. For example, *qəddus/qədduṣ* is listed not only under קידוש but also under הרִי אֵת, כּוֹס, and מִזִּיגָה; and *mláx ham-máwət* and *saṭá* are listed under the entry for Amalek. The index also enables users to find Hebrew forms that have integrated morphologically and phonologically into their target languages, such as Judeo-Italian *ngangarelle* (נֶעֶר 'little boy') and Judeo-Georgian *exšeri* (הַכְּשֵׁר 'seal of kosher approval'). This is helpful for researchers who hear such a word and want to look it up but do not think to look under נֶעֶר or הַכְּשֵׁר.

Another helpful innovation is the addition of an alphabetized index of informants' abbreviated names. The informant index in the first edition sorted the informants by country, so users had to look through several countries to find the informant/city listed in the entry—the only way to figure out which country the word was from if users were not familiar with the city name. The second edition (which, interestingly, changes the heading for "informants" from מִידְעָנִים to מַסְרָנִים) includes this index, but it also includes an alphabetic index, which makes it easier to find informants and, therefore, to determine which country the data are from.

Despite these new features, the dictionary is still less user-friendly than it could be. One shortcoming is the omission of language names. Even well informed readers are often left wondering: are the data collected in northern Morocco from speech in Judeo-Arabic, Haketía, Judeo-Berber, or Jewish French? What about an entry listed as coming from a city in northwestern Iran—is that from Judeo-Persian, Judeo-Median, or Jewish Neo-Aramaic? Aside from these locations where multiple languages have been spoken, interpreting most entries requires either that users have extensive knowledge of Jewish geography and researchers in the field or that they spend a great deal of time flipping back and forth from entries to the bibliography and informant index to determine which languages are represented.

Imagine I want to find out if and how the word מְשׁוּגָע 'crazy' is used in Jewish languages around the world. I find the entry מְשׁוּגָע in alphabetical order on p. 489. It includes two definitions, 'mentally ill' and 'nickname for Muhammad.' The first definition is documented in two locations, *mšuggá'* in Baghdad, and *mešugga'* and its feminine correlate, *mešugga'á* ('odd woman') in Tetouan, with a reference to work by Ben-Tolila. Knowing that Baghdad is in Iraq and the Jews there spoke Judeo-Arabic, I conclude that *mšuggá'* meaning 'mentally ill' was used in Iraqi Judeo-Arabic. I also happen to know that Yaakov Ben-Tolila

researches Haketía, a Judeo-Spanish language spoken in Morocco. Had I not known that, I could have gone to the bibliography and found that information.

Interpreting the second definition requires more work on my part. It is documented as *mišigá* in a city or town called something like Borojerd (Hebrew spelling includes multiple ambiguities) and *maššugga'* elsewhere. I do not know where Borojerd is, so I look up H.Y., Borojerd, in the informant index, and find that he is Yaakov Hakimi, from Borojerd, Iran. Now I look up Borojerd, Iran, on Google Maps and, thanks to Google's sound matching technology, learn it is Borujerd, a city in the west of Iran. However, this still does not help me determine which language this sub-entry is from. It could be Judeo-Persian, Judeo-Median, or even Jewish Neo-Aramaic, as Borujerd is not far from the Kurdish region. I check an article about Judeo-Median (Borjian 2014) and find that Borujerd is listed as one of the cities in which Jews spoke Judeo-Median, so I conclude that it is likely Judeo-Median. Whether or not my conclusion is correct, my point is that readers should not have to go through such an extensive research process to determine which languages the data are from.

I look up the seven references in the final paragraph and find that most are works on Judeo-Arabic: from Yemen, Morocco, Tunisia, a work on Iraq/Syria/Egypt, as well as a general article by Shelomo Morag on Hebrew words in Jewish languages. Overall, I conclude that this word is used in various varieties of Judeo-Arabic, some language in Iran, and Haketía in Morocco. The presence of references and informant names makes this dictionary well documented, and the addition of the alphabetical informant index makes this edition easier to use than the previous one. However, the simple addition of language names in each paragraph of each entry would save a lot of time for users who are not familiar with all of the cities and researchers. If this would make the dictionary too long, the language names could at least be listed in the informant index.

Maman's introduction states that this dictionary is not intended to replace existing dictionaries of "prestigious languages"—Ladino (Bunis 1993) and Yiddish (Niborski 2012)—or written languages (e.g., Bahat 2002 on written Moroccan Judeo-Arabic). However, this dictionary does include references to published dictionaries of Hebrew words in Judeo-Arabic, such as 436 references to Avishur 2001 and 772 references to Henshke 2007 (the omission of Henshke 2007 from the bibliography of the first edition was rectified in this edition). It also includes 1236 references to Ben-Tolila's (2015) dictionary (at least I think the references called "Ben-Tolila, Tetouan" refer to that dictionary, even though the bibliography lists it as simply "Ben Tolila" with no hyphen and no "Tetouan"). Given the stated goal of providing new data and not incorporating data on languages that have been extensively researched, perhaps it would

have been good to omit all of the entries in Haketía and Tunisian Judeo-Arabic once dictionaries of Hebrew words in those languages had been published. It is also odd that the dictionary includes data from Maria Mayer-Modena's soon-to-be published dictionary of the Hebrew words in Judeo-Italian but no reference to or data from a published dictionary of Hebrew words in Judeo-Italian (Aprile 2012). A likely explanation for all of these decisions is that the dictionary is intended not only as a reference work on less-documented Jewish languages but also as a culmination and documentation of the more than two decades of research of the workshop Morag initiated.

The remainder of my comments are premised on the idea (or dream?) that it is possible to incorporate the impressive collection of data in this dictionary into a comprehensive database of Hebrew and Aramaic words in Jewish languages. The first step that would be helpful in this process is to round out the data for the languages covered in the book. For example, דַּוֵּי ('witness') is listed in Judeo-Arabic (North African, Algerian, Tunisian, and Moroccan) and Haketía, but not Syrian, Iraqi, Yemenite, Libyan, or Egyptian Judeo-Arabic, Judeo-Georgian, Jewish Neo-Aramaic, Judeo-Italian, or Judeo-Persian/Median. Similarly, when I look up the name פִּנְחָס, I find it listed as *nḥáyyəš* / *benḥáš* in Tunisian Judeo-Arabic, *nḥaysí* in Libyan Judeo-Arabic, *pino* and *pilxaz* in Judeo-Georgian, and unidentified forms in Judeo-Spanish and Yemenite Judeo-Arabic. But the entry does not list other varieties of Judeo-Arabic, Judeo-Persian/Median, Jewish Neo-Aramaic, Judeo-Italian, or Haketía. When a location is listed without a pronunciation, readers are left wondering exactly how the word was pronounced in that location. And when locations are not listed, readers do not know whether this is because the word is not attested in those locations or because informants were not asked about the word. Ideally informants from each location would be asked about each entry. Then the database would include a cell for each language/location in each entry, listing either "not attested" or the precise pronunciation(s), meaning(s), and one or more example sentences.

The database would then combine this collection of data with entries from several published dictionaries (e.g., Glinert 1992; Benor 2012–20 – Jewish English; Bunis 1993 – Ladino/Judezmo/Judeo-Spanish; Bahat 2002 – written Moroccan Judeo-Arabic; Aprile 2012 – Judeo-Italian; Niborski 2012 – Yiddish), combined with informant consultations for those languages for each entry. For other languages, such as Judeo-Greek, Jewish Latin American Spanish, Jewish Malayalam, Judeo-Tajik (Bukharian), and Judeo-Tat (Juhuri), the database would convene scholars and speakers of those languages to complete each entry. This database, assuming it was set up in a logical and user-friendly way

(including language names), could enable the kind of analysis called for in a recent research agenda for comparative Jewish linguistic studies (Benor and Hary 2018). The need for this work is urgent, because the last (native) speakers of several of these languages are quite elderly. Once this time-sensitive work is done, the database can incorporate extinct languages like Judeo-Provençal and Judeo-French, whose only attestations are in writing.

Turning back to the book under review, Maman's dictionary represents an extensive and well-documented collection of Hebrew words in several Jewish languages: Judeo-Arabic (especially from Tunisia, Libya, Morocco, Yemen, and Iraq, but also some entries from Algeria, Syria, and Egypt), Haketía, Judeo-Georgian, Judeo-Italian, Judeo-Persian/Judeo-Median, and, I assume, Jewish Neo-Aramaic (cities/towns under the regional heading "Kurdistan"). The heft of this edition conveys the significance of the influence of Hebrew on Jewish languages around the world. This book, along with several other published works, represents the basis for a comprehensive database of Hebrew words in Jewish languages—a desideratum for comparative research on Jewish languages. Although such a database will take many years—and will never be complete, as Jews continue to develop new uses of Hebrew words—I am eager to work on it and see it come to fruition. Maman's second edition leads us many steps closer to this aspirational goal.

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